

21TIPS *for* 21st CENTURY LEARNING



Voted the **#1 Educational Search Tool** for K-12 Schools
Trusted by More Than 12 Million Students, Educators, and Parents Worldwide!

“ I'm calling on our nation's governors and state education chiefs to develop standards and assessments that don't simply measure whether students can fill in a bubble on a test, but whether they possess 21st century skills like problem-solving and critical thinking and entrepreneurship and creativity. - *President Barack Obama*

Are you ready to *galvanize* your students' 21st century skills?

GALVANIZE: VERB. *To Stimulate.*



The gauntlet is down. Education, government and industry leaders desire and require today's students to be technically literate, ingenious, globally minded, culture-conscious, adaptable, life-long learners with robust work ethics who possess a desire to lead and collaborate.

Overwhelmed yet? Don't be. Here are 21 tips that can help you help your students reach their 21st century potential.

Start by asking yourself a few questions ...

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Ask: CAN YOUR STUDENTS...?

1. COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

How do you teach communication skills? Start with yourself and lead by example. Make eye contact, smile and practice active listening—tune in and wait to form your response until after the other person finishes speaking.

Use good grammar, stay calm when tensions are high and remember good communication skills are honed over time, so be patient with yourself.

Engage your students in role-playing. Convince them to look at situations from the other person's perspective.

Encourage them to read their writing aloud before submitting an assignment; often the ear catches mistakes the eyes miss.



“ While employers rate communication skills as one of their most desired characteristics, they also report that they are the skills that are most lacking in today’s job candidates, says Marilyn Mackes, executive director for the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](https://naacpe.org/).

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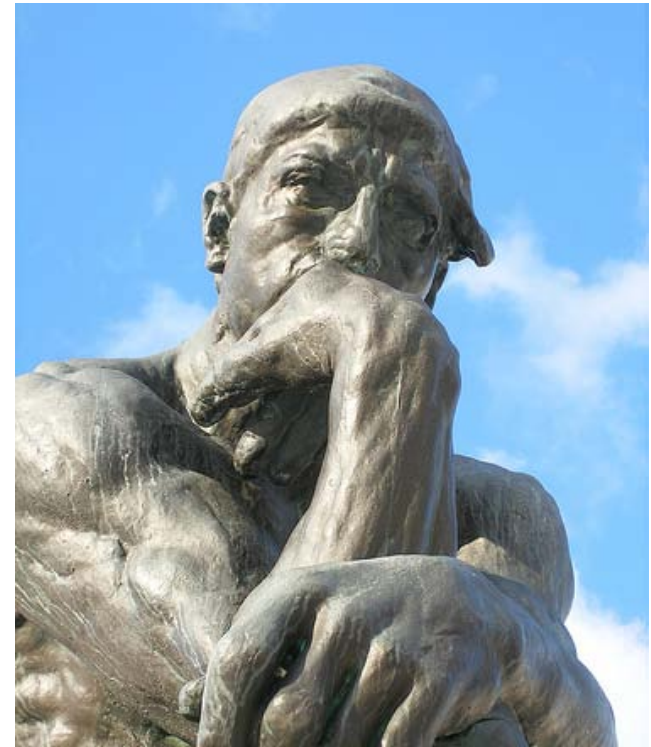
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2. THINK CRITICALLY

Are your students using their smarts to make good decisions? When they answer your questions, are they reciting facts from their textbooks? Are they able to analyze and evaluate information, applying their knowledge across a spectrum of subjects and situations?

When engaged in class discussions, avoid closed-ended (yes or no) questions. Instead, ask questions that force students to delve into the subject and reflect on what they've read. Help them determine the difference between fact and opinion.

The ability to think critically will make it easier for your students to sort reliable sources from not-so-reliable ones, solve real-world problems and will encourage them to explore their own ideas.



Additional information about the importance of critical thinking, including lessons plans, are available through our partners at 21CenturySkills.org.

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3. SOLVE PROBLEMS

Sometimes problems seem so daunting that solutions aren't readily apparent and students may become frustrated.

Encourage them to step back and analyze the situation objectively. Start by having them define the problem in writing. Then, break it into smaller pieces and encourage your students to deal with each piece one at a time.

Help them brainstorm solutions. If a solution isn't readily apparent, help them research the problem and analyze how others have solved similar problems.



Check out this [problem solving lesson plan](#) for 5th graders, provided by the University of North Carolina.

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4. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

Directions are everywhere, on your students' cell phone GPS, at the bus stop and on the packaging their dinner comes in from the grocery store. The ability to read and follow directions successfully is a basic building block to success in a society bursting with instructions.

The University of California at Santa Barbara's psychology department offers a wonderful tool for assessing your students' ability to follow directions. Check it out [here](#).

Once you have an idea of where they stand, teach them to improve by utilizing the communication, critical thinking and problem solving skills you've been working on together.

“You have to know how to read a map, or you will be in trouble. – Dennis Lane



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5. CHOOSE WISELY

Making good decisions involves self-confidence, knowledge and resourcefulness. Give your students the responsibility to make their own decisions. Help them choose positive solutions by working with them to think through the consequences of their choices.

Start simply:

"Would you like (A) or (B), (C) or (D)?"

Speak frankly about their options and allow them to make mistakes. Be compassionate and discuss their decisions after-the-fact. Was this the best decision for the situation? What could they have done better?

Applaud wise decisions.



PBS' Empire Game is a fun way to help your students develop their decision making skills. Play [here](#).

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6. EMBRACE LEARNING

As you know, one of the best ways to promote life-long learning is to encourage students to read from an early age.

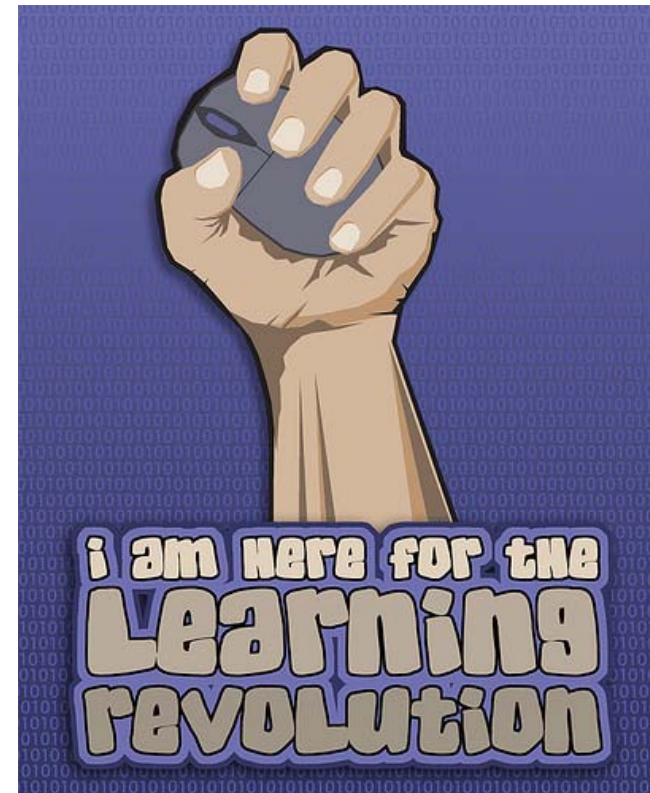
You can also encourage learning by nurturing your students' interests and hobbies, by allowing them to share their thoughts and opinions in a judgment-free zone and by being excited about their learning progress.

By listening and being supportive as your students express themselves, you are encouraging them to delve deeper into their interests, build their confidence and that learning can be enjoyable and fun.



[Literacy Statistics](#) from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

- 5 percent of American adults cannot read English at all
- 30 million may not be able read well enough to comprehend a simple pamphlet
- Adults who can complete complex reading tasks made an average salary of \$50,700 in 2003
- Adults who lacked those basic skills made an average of \$22,700 in the same year



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7. ADAPT QUICKLY

Change can be stressful, but it doesn't have to be. Successful people learn to adapt to change – *fast* – and manage any stress that tags along.

Help your students learn to recognize the symptoms of stress and to navigate around difficulty by finding the best possible solutions for any problems that might pop up.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer two tools for youth that will help them detect and manage stress: the [Stress-O-Meter](#) and their "[Feelin' Frazzled?](#)" list, which offers 10 helpful tips. The tips include basics like: exercise, laugh, volunteer and get some sleep.

Teaching your students to manage stress will not only help them adapt quickly in our ever-changing society, you'll also ensure they thrive in our competitive, fast-paced world.



8. ORGANIZE CAPABLY

Whether it is a research paper, their schedule or their closet, your students will only benefit when you emphasize strong organizational skills in your classroom.

KidsHealth.org explains what it takes to get organized in simple terms:

1. Gather your supplies
2. Get to where you need to be on time
3. Stay focused
4. Get it done



Scholastic.com offers tools and tips to students in their Homework Hub. They cover ranking priorities, time management and more.

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9. PRIORITIZE TASKS

Speaking of prioritization, teaching students how to prioritize—whether their time or their to-do lists—can be as easy as making an ordered list.

First, have your students make a list of everything they need to accomplish today. Next, tell them to give each task a priority level: 'A' for tasks that *must* be done today, 'B' for tasks that *should* be done today, and 'C' for tasks that can be postponed until tomorrow.

Next, rank the like priorities in the order they need to be accomplished and check them off once they're completed.



Priority	Task List	Done
A1	Walk the dog	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A2	Math Homework	<input type="checkbox"/>
A3	Soccer Practice	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Call Grandma	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Update Facebook page	<input type="checkbox"/>

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10. PRESENT EFFECTIVELY

"It is even scarier than rattlesnakes," Paul L. Witt told [WebMD](#). "The idea of making a presentation in public is the No. 1 fear reported by people in the U.S."

Presentation skills are also one of the skills employers are looking for. (Check out this [LinkedIn forum](#) where presentation skills were listed no less than five times by nine human resources professionals.)

There is no way around it; the only way to conquer this fear is through practice. Give your students an advantage by planning regular in-class presentations.

[The Vocational Information Center](#) has an impressive list of communication skills resources, and an entire list dedicated to presentation skills and another on public speaking. These tools are sure to help you help your students become strong public speakers.



11. UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY

Information Communications Technology (ICT) literacy is a hot topic in 21st century classrooms, as you well know.

The National Center for Technological Literacy, part of Boston's Museum of Science, has dedicated a portion of their Website to ICT for [K-12 initiatives](#).

Something to keep in mind is that students need life-long technological skills, not necessarily training for a certain software package.



Jakob Nielson, author of numerous technology books and articles, offers his suggestions for teaching life-long technology skills [here](#).

12. CONVERSE ONLINE

The Internet is going to be a part of your students' life, so help them navigate that vast electronic universe by teaching them the appropriate way to converse online.

Cnet.com estimates in their article, "[Teaching kids to drive the Internet](#)," that 94 percent of kids access the Internet at home.

But, what are they writing—and, as important—how are they writing it?

Contrary to popular jokes about entire conversations carried on in acronyms, abbreviations and with sloppy spelling ("Wut RU doin?"; "BRT"), it is *not* cool to avoid good grammar online. Capital letters count, punctuation counts and so does word choice.



Online, the world is watching. What will the world think of your students' writing skills?

13. CONNECT GLOBALLY

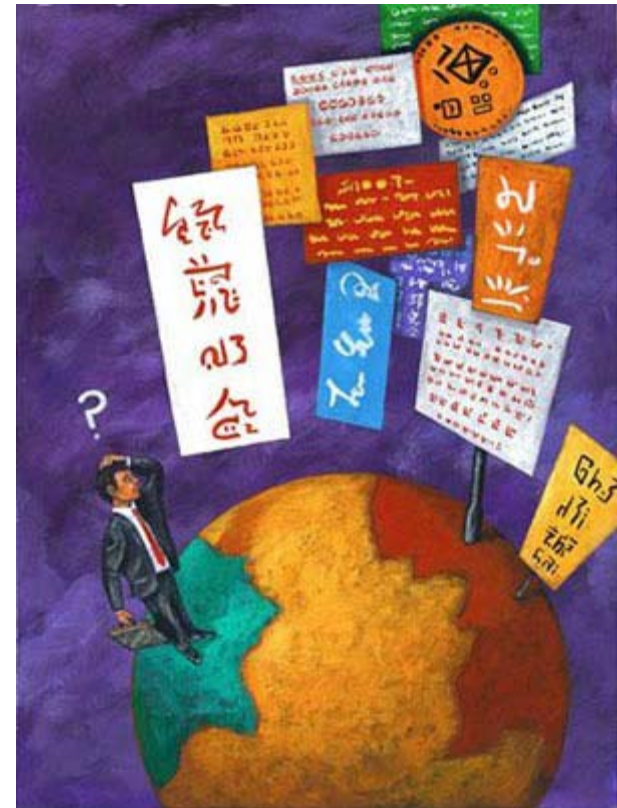
The world might physically be the same size it's always been, but the Internet sure does make it *feel* smaller.

We already know it's likely your students will be online, what is also likely is that they will run into people from various countries around the world.

How will they react? Will they be compassionate or boorish?

Do they know that the seasons are reversed in the Southern Hemisphere and that Australia is half a day ahead of us? Are they patient with people for whom English is a second language?

We will live in a global community, so prepare your students by teaching compassion. GoodCharacter.com has some suggestions; read them [here](#).



Further reading: [Bringing a cultural consciousness to the classroom](#), by Dina Horwedel

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14. APPRECIATE TEAMWORK

Something else your students will encounter—*time after time*—throughout their life is teamwork.

Business leaders tell university leaders they need team players. Therefore, students can expect the majority of their college classes to require group work.

The Educational Psychology and Leadership Skills Program at the University of Victoria, in British Columbia, Canada, suggests a list of skills that lead to effective group work, including:

- Active listening
- Sharing: materials and time
- Offering support
- Explaining skills and seeking explanations from others
- Encouraging others



Read the rest of their suggestions [here](#).



15. RESOLVE CONFLICT

Conflict is a part of life. We simply cannot get along with everyone all of the time. That's why it is imperative that students possess the skills to manage and resolve conflict when it arises.

Simple ways to side-step conflict involve learning to be flexible, communicating effectively and utilizing the problem solving skills we discussed earlier. It is also helpful to recognize that not all conflict is bad.

Conflict can encourage team building and creativity, but it can also become personal. Help students to understand the difference between constructive criticism and personal attacks, and encourage them to be thoughtful about how they critique others.



Teach-nology.com offers several lesson plans dealing with conflict resolution [here](#).

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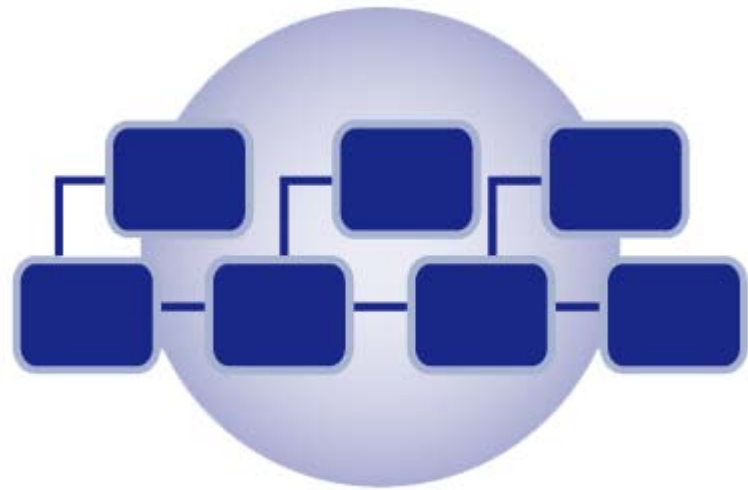
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16. ESTABLISH STANDARDS

Can your students explain how to do something, even as simple as brushing their teeth? They might have to, eventually. Why not start teaching them how to organize and document their work now?

The Website, 21st Century Literacies, recommended by The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, offers some insight into how to teach your students to benchmark a process, including:

- Questioning
- Identifying and Collecting
- Evaluating
- Sensemaking
- Reflecting and Refining
- Using
- Assessing



Read more about 21st Century Literacies' suggestions [here](#).

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17. LEAD SUCCESSFULLY

On the Life and Career Skills page, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills summarizes this sought-after skill like this:

Guide and Lead Others

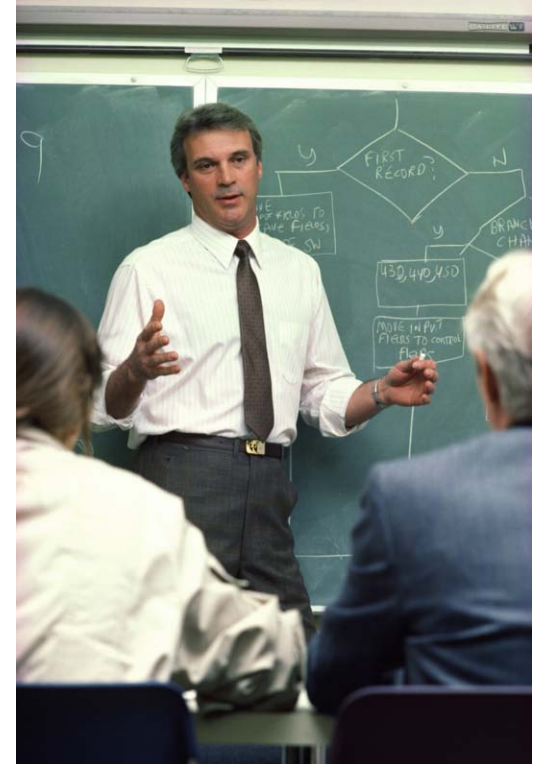
- Use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal
- Leverage strengths of others to accomplish a common goal
- Inspire others to reach their very best via example and selflessness
- Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in using influence and power

Be Responsible to Others

- Act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind



Read more about life and career skills [here](#).



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18. MOTIVATE OTHERS

Motivating others is easy if you think about how you would like to be motivated yourself. The same goes for your students.

When they are in leadership roles and trying to figure out how to inspire their classmates to go along with their plan or volunteer for their organization, encourage them to stop and think about what would motivate them to action.

Remind them to avoid being judgmental, listen to their group members attentively, engage their problem-solving skills and—most importantly—set a good example.

Check out MoneyInstructor.com's leadership [lesson plan](#).



“ Really great people make you feel that you, too, can become great. – Mark Twain

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19. BE INNOVATIVE

It took Thomas Edison thousands of tries before he invented the commercial light bulb.

Edison famously said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

Being innovative is as much about being resilient as it is about being creative. So, how can you teach your students to try-try-again without giving up?

First, they need a goal. What is it they want to do? What interests them? Encourage them to explore their goal in writing, break the task down into manageable chunks and prioritize the tasks.

Then, tell them to get to work. When things don't go the way they expected, congratulate them on getting one-step closer to their goal and encourage them to try again.



Think Creatively with Albert Einstein [here](#).

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20. PROMOTE IDEAS

Once your students have created something or become involved in an organization they are excited about, explain that it's time for them to delve into the great big world of marketing.

They don't need a corporate budget to get the word out, they can communicate online through the same social networking sites, like [Twitter](#), [MySpace](#), [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#), they may already be familiar with; all three will allow them to create a page—for free—for their idea, product or organization.

Even Microsoft, one of the largest companies in the world, uses social media to [promote](#) their new products.



The Center for Creative Leadership offers in-depth guidance in their "Making the sale: how to pitch your ideas" article, which you can read [here](#).

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21. NEGOTIATE THOUGHTFULLY

Whether they are selling their innovative idea to an interested buyer, persuading their friend to volunteer for a fundraiser or asking their boss for a raise, here are a few tips that will help your students negotiate a fair deal:

- Know your strengths
- Know the other person's strengths
- Be prepared
- Be honest
- Know when to compromise
- Know when to walk away



The Website How-To-Negotiate.com offers suggestions for every step of the negotiation process.

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For the first time in generations, the young will inherit a society rife with social and economic problems daunting for even the most experienced citizen to face. As their teacher, you can help prepare them for the challenging tasks that lay ahead by teaching them 21st Century Skills: a blend of life, learning, innovation and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) literacy skills.

Though the big picture may seem overwhelming, remember to break it down into smaller portions.

Start with a smile and attentive listening. Solve problems and resolve conflicts as they arrive while looking for creative innovation at every opportunity.

Encourage your students to communicate thoughtfully, make wise decisions, participate fully in groups and to lead by example. Motivate them to engage in our global community with compassion.

Teach them that nothing is out of their reach if they work hard enough and, together, one moment, one day, one goal at a time you will help create a successful future.



For more 21st Century Skills resources,
Check out netTrekker's 21st Century Skills Channel.

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